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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA CENSUS RESULTS - STATUS QUO MAINTAINED

REF: A. 06 ABUJA 2836

[A. 06 ABUJA 688](#)

[A. 06 ABUJA 634](#)

[B. 06 ABUJA 568](#)

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[1](#). (SBU) SUMMARY: The Nigerian National Population Commission (NPC) released the first census in 15 years. The census tabulations affirmed conventional wisdom that the majority of the population is in the 17 northern states - 75 million compared to 65 million in the southern states. The largest state is Kano, followed by Lagos, Kaduna and Katsina. The NPC reportedly will release tabulations for cities, local government authorities and towns in several weeks time. The major funding donor, the EU Commission, had not yet received the official figures and commented that it played no role in the data evaluation of the census. END SUMMARY.

Piecemeal Release of the Census

[2](#). (U) On January 9, the National Council of State (NCS) met and unanimously accepted the provisional results of the 2006 census that was handed over to the Federal Executive Council in December 2006 by the NPC. The NCS comprises the President, former heads of state and the state governors. The NCS met under the chairmanship of President Obasanjo.

State Tabulations - Northern Weight

[3](#). (SBU) The overall population of the country stands at 140 million (m), a 63% increase since the last census in 1991. Most population experts regard the 1991 census as undercounting the actual number of persons in the country. The population comprises 71 million males and 68 million females. The northern states have a population of 75 million, while those in the south have a population of 65 million. The largest ten states are:

- Kano 9.3m
- Lagos 9.01m
- Kaduna 6.06m
- Katsina 5.7m
- Oyo 5.5m
- Rivers 5.1m
- Bauchi 4.6m

-- Jigawa 4.3m
-- Benue 4.2m
-- Delta 4.09m
-- Niger 3.9m

The smallest state is the FCT with a population of 1.4 million.

¶4. (U) The fastest annual growth rate is in the FCT at 9.3% followed by:

-- Yobe 3.5%
-- Rivers, Oyo, Niger, Borno and Bauchi 3.4%

The slowest annual growth rates are in Abia, Edo and Plateau at 2.7%.

The President Speaks Out

¶5. (U) President Obasanjo said that Nigeria must control its population growth rate to ensure that the economy can accommodate the population. He noted that the 3.2% annual growth rate implies that a minimum economic growth rate of 10%t was necessary and that high rates of poverty generally correlate with large households. He asserted that more focus be given educating female children education and discouraging early marriage.

Lagos State Figure Lower Than Expected

¶6. (SBU) Lagos State Government (LSG) said it would study the results before coming out with its position regarding the census result. Before the census the LSG had believed that the population of Lagos was not be less than 15m people, considering in 1996 the United Nations estimated the population at 10.9m, projecting that it would become the world's third most populous city with 24.6 million inhabitants by 2015. Metropolitan Lagos spills over into neighboring Ogun state so Lagos State and Lagos metropolitan population need not correlate. Still, it is difficult to believe

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that the Lagos State population could be less than 10 million.

Not Everyone Agrees with the Census Figures

¶7. (SBU) In reftel A we reported that the Civil Society Coalition on Census Monitoring (CSCCM), a collective effort of 80 NGOs to monitor the census compiled a report that concluded that the census was disorganized and inefficient. CSCCM representatives told us that its monitors documented a general nationwide problem with a lack of materials and or staff at many locations. Moreover, many people were discouraged from waiting in long lines, while others could not find people to document them, and others, hoping to game the system, registered in multiple places. CSCCM underscored that many people were not counted, and overall, the 2006 census did not inspire a sufficient level of technical or political confidence to call it successful.

¶8. (SBU) Abia State Governor Orji Uzor Kalu told the media that he disagreed with the census figures. He said "Nigerians are not 140 million. We are 210 million. Taking my own family into consideration, I was the only one counted during the last census, my wife, children, household help and many people in my village and state were not counted."

¶9. (SBU) The Deputy Chief of Mission of the Brazilian Embassy scoffed at the released census figures and commented that the numbers are greatly inflated. Abubakar Momoh, political science lecturer at Lagos State University, told the media that if the figures had shown a majority of the population resided in the south, it could have led to a very chaotic situation. He added that there would be disappointment in the south, but did not believe it would lead to major protests or violence.

¶10. (SBU) The European Commission was a major backer of the census, contributing \$138 million. A representative of the Commission said that it provided technical support, equipment and consultants to help the NPC. The Commission had no role in the tabulation and

evaluation of figures. As of January 10, the Commission had not been provided with an official release of census figures and complained that the NPC was slow to respond to inquiries. He noted that tabulations could be challenged via census tribunals to be constituted at the direction of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Each state would be designated with a census tribunal and members would come from state courts. The tribunals would be constituted once all final census figures are released.

Comment

¶11. (SBU) The politically sensitive breakdown of census figures maintained the status quo ahead of April elections. Reftel A predicted that mid-January would be a realistic time period for release of the census. The figures holding the population of the northern states at 75 million and that of the southern states at 65 million do not challenge Nigeria's complex political system, which has been delicately balanced for decades on the assumption the north has a numerical advantage. Census figures usually spark controversy in Nigeria because the population is a basis for revenue sharing. States with larger populations get a bigger share of the Federation Account. UN and NGO figures of 12 to 15m (including Lagos metropolitan areas outside Lagos state) could be at odds with the census finding of Lagos State as only 9.01 million. The provisional figure of 1.4 million for the FCT appears an understatement. Demographic observers in the FCT opine that the population should not be less than 3 million. However, many residents likely claim to live in their states of origin, offsetting some of the discrepancy.

¶12. (SBU) NGO organizations and some observers have serious reservations about whether the census tabulations were transparent and fair, and credible. These observers speculate that the data is inconsistent with voter registration information. We received numerous complaints reported in reftels B,C and D associated with the conduct of the census such as inadequate enumeration materials, inadequate training for the ad-hoc enumeration officers, and delay in the payment of allowances of enumeration officials. These factors resulted in numerous people not being counted and some enumeration officials refusing to conduct enumeration when they were

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not paid. As the new figures are absorbed, a number of quibbles and challenges can be expected. One point is certain - the Nigerian population will continue to grow and regional elites will spin this growth to substantiate political claims.
CAMPBELL